



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

JAMES H. LEUBA

The recent extension of scientific psychology to religious life could not leave the theologian unconcerned. "What theological problems can the psychological treatment of religion solve?" "According to what method must the psychology of religion proceed?" These and other questions have become, especially among German theologians, frequent topics of discussion.

The Ritschlians had solved the relation of science to religion by divorcing them. This significant tactical movement was in essence the outcome of the conviction to which theology had been driven, that all efforts at harmonizing science and religion had failed. Psychologists of mark have spoken in support of the Ritschlian opinion. Flournoy, for instance, voiced the belief in the independence of religion from science: "Never be afraid of science. . . . In particular do not fear its influence upon your faith, for science and faith are not of the same order. Science is neutral, silent, 'agnostic,' regarding the foundation of things and the final meaning of life. It is an unfair use of it which makes it proclaim any dogma whatsoever, whether materialistic or spiritualistic. And so, never ask of it arguments favoring your convictions; the support it might seem to lend you would be but a reed, which, should you lean upon it, would pierce your hand. But be equally certain that it does not speak in favor of antagonistic doctrines."¹

The opinion that theology is independent of science is usually found associated with another characteristic

¹ Th. Flournoy, *Le Génie Religieux*, a lecture to the Swiss Students' Christian Association, Sainte-Croix, 1904. P. 34.

tenet: "inner experience" is held to be the only source, or at least the ultimate source, of belief. It is indeed strange that most of those who adopt the independence-from-science theory should look to inner experience as the ultimate ground of belief. The theology of "inner experience" reopens the debate which Ritschl thought he had closed, since to regard the facts of the inner life as those upon which theology rests is to make it dependent upon psychological science.

Let it be understood, however, that the theologians with whom I am concerned—not even those who, like Wobbermin, point to a psychological method as *the* method of theology—have not the least intention of deriving the fundamental propositions of their system from a *scientific* treatment of religious experience. Wobbermin, for instance, affirms that the reality of the objects of faith, instead of being identical in kind with the reality of the objects of knowledge, is, on the contrary, "completely different both in qualitative and in quantitative respects." "God and divine things are not and cannot be objects of human knowledge (*Wissens und Erkennens*)"; they are objects of faith. The absolute value of religion is *given* with even greater certitude than is the reality of the objects of empirical experience.²

The divorce of theology from science is pronounced on one or both of two related grounds. Either God is said to be a transcendental object and therefore inaccessible to science; or religious knowledge is said to be a form of knowledge altogether different from scientific knowledge. We shall take up in succession these two claims.

² Georg Wobbermin, *Die Religionspsychologische Methode in Religionswissenschaft und Theologie*. Leipzig; Hinrich, 1913, pp. 388–391. This is the most formal effort made so far to set forth a psychological method for the use of theology. (Reviewed by the author in the *Psy. Bull.*, Dec. 15, pp. 462–470.)

1. *The object of religion (God) is a transcendental object, and is therefore inaccessible to science.* Every historical religion, with the exception of Comtism, is rooted in the belief in anthropopathic personal Power, or Powers, with whom man can maintain such direct personal relations as are implied in Christian worship. Replace that God by the Absolute of modern Idealism, and sacrifices, offerings, prayers, have lost their proper object; the Christian books of common prayer have become irrelevant. The relations that can be maintained by man with the Absolute of metaphysics and with the gods of religion, are different because these conceptions are different. They cannot be used interchangeably. Each may be used in its proper place, for different purposes. There are men who in critical, rationalistic moods entertain the idea of an Eternal Reason, an impersonal Creative Energy; and who, in times of pressing moral needs, apparently believe in a personal Being. In the latter alternative only can they conform to the demands of any religion. Here are instances in which this shift of conception is clearly realized. The first three are from an investigation, not yet published, on "The American College Students' Idea of God":

"God to my mind is an impersonal being; but whether for convenience or through sheer impotence, I pray to him as a personal being. I probably think of Christ when I pray."

"I think of God as both a personal and impersonal being. I think of him as personal when I feel the need of some support outside myself; a sympathy and understanding which no one else can give. I like to think of him as impersonal at other times; as a power like ether, which is infused through everything."

"In an agitated or excited state of mind, I think of God as a Personal Father who is ready to reward or punish. But generally I think of God as a mass of forces having certain effects follow from certain causes; the force that causes us to do good will bring with it its own reward, and *vice versa*."

A German well known by his psychological works writes:

“Fortunately, to know and to understand God, which is impossible, is not essential; but to feel and to ‘live Him’ is the crucial, necessary thing. To realize that entirely practical ideal, we must, in my opinion, believe in a personal God. For it seems to me impossible for man to be able to enter into ethical relations with an impersonal being. Is not this the most profound meaning of Christianity; the Divine One took flesh, He became man to reveal Himself a man, not in order to be understood but that He might be loved? I feel, therefore, that we have not only the right, but perhaps even the duty to represent to ourselves the Divine as a personal God. *But, at the same time, we must never forget that this idea corresponds not to the nature of the Divine, but only to the nature of man. It is only an expedient*, but, as it seems to me, an indispensable expedient.”³

Men of surpassing intellectual power have done even as this German scientist, and not every one of them has been able to keep in mind the merely expedient character of the personal conception. St. Augustine recognized that the expression “mercy” could not properly be applied to the Absolute, since the word implies suffering through the suffering of others. Nevertheless, he thought himself justified in using the term in order “to save the ignorant from stumbling.” The “ignorant!” The learned doctor himself found it impossible to believe only in the impersonal, infinite God. The *Confessions* show that, like less powerful intellects, St. Augustine maintained tender sentimental relations with his God; relations more dignified, to be sure, but of the same character as those described by the great love-sick Spanish mystic. Schleiermacher provides another illustrious instance of the existence side by side of two God-conceptions, each one used in turn according to the need of the moment. “To attribute mercy to

³ Le Divin, Expériences et Hypothèses, Marcel Hebert, p. 130.

God," writes Schleiermacher, "were more appropriate to a homiletic or poetic manner of speaking than to the dogmatic."⁴

There should not be need of argumentation in defense of the affirmation that a God who does not stand in direct affective and intellectual relation with man is not the God of the Christian, nor of any other historical religion, save Comtism. I have in another place attempted to show with some fulness of detail that these two conceptions of the Divinity have had different origins, and that still other God-ideas have arisen from other sources. Here I can only say that under the urgency of different needs man formed several ideas of great, trans-human beings; and that the attributes ascribed to these beings were different with the different needs which instigated their discovery or creation. For instance, out of the logical necessity, in order to understand the universe, of stopping somewhere in the regression by which science passes from one phenomenon to another regarded as its cause, arises the so-called cosmological argument for the existence of a First Cause. A need quite different urges the Christian mystics to a belief in a quite different Being, the loving All-Father.

Now, a Being can legitimately possess only the attributes required in order to gratify the need from which he arose. Thus the Cosmological Being may properly be spoken of as the First Cause, the Absolute, the Principle of Unification, or even the "eternally Complete Consciousness," but he should not receive names denoting anthropopathic personality. To conceive of the First Cause as personal in that sense is to add elements foreign to those demanded by the logical necessity of stopping the regression of secondary causes. The Being which the metaphysical arguments seek to demonstrate for the gratification of our logical propensity

⁴ *Der Christliche Glaube*, p. 85.

must be conceived of as impassive, whereas the Being demanded by the Christian heart and conscience must above all else be a compassionate and righteous Being.

That the gods of metaphysics are not the gods of religion, is clearly acknowledged by Arthur J. Balfour in the last Gifford Lectures. "When in the course of these lectures," writes this philosopher, "I speak of God, I mean something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in solution. I mean a God whom men can love, to whom men can pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, howsoever conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created."⁵

When one says in Hegelian phraseology that the Absolute is self-revealing, that the world and the finite consciousness of man are manifestations of God, and that man experiences the Absolute, one uses the terms "manifestation" and "revelation" in a sense quite different from that given to them by the practising Christian. The latter means by these terms an intervention of God's loving power, producing those selected inner experiences which seem to him specifically divine; whereas the philosopher means that the developing consciousness itself is, in its entirety, an expression of God. It should be evident to all that a God of whom the whole universe is the manifestation, and whose action is always in the form of law, is not the Being celebrated and invoked in any liturgy. The gods of the historical religions stand over against nature, and are powerful to alter the course of events at their good pleasure. That is the conception which pervades every form of established worship.

⁵ Theism and Humanism. 1914. Pp. 20-21. For an attempted demonstration of the correctness of this distinction, see chapter xi, especially pages 245 to 254, of my book, *A Psychological Study of Religion; its Origin, its Function, and its Future*. Macmillan, 1912.

If today not all Christians hear God in the thunder or see him otherwise manipulating physical nature, they are at least unanimous in affirming that God reveals himself in what is termed interchangeably "inner" or "spiritual" experience; "there," they say, "in my consciousness is manifested the truth of religion, the reality of God." Some hold that in these experiences God is directly "apprehended" or "perceived"; that is the mystical position. Others hold that spiritual experiences are only the data from which God is inferred; in both cases specific experiences are accepted as sufficient to prove the truth of religion. What are these specific "inner" or "spiritual" experiences? Here are two fairly typical quotations from which may be gathered both *that God is held to reveal himself* in inner experience and *what is the nature* of his supposed action.

A professor at the school of Protestant theology of Paris writes:

"God is not a phenomenon that we may observe apart from ourselves, or a truth demonstrable by logical reasoning. He who does not feel Him in his heart will never feel Him from without. The object of religious knowledge reveals itself only in the subject, by means of the religious phenomena themselves."⁶

Digamma of Oxford University rests his faith upon the induction made from the following facts. At twenty-one he found himself involved in circumstances that seemed as if they must lead to the ruin of his career. I quote:

"The circumstances of which I have spoken tended to produce extreme mental depression. A cloud had, as it were, descended upon my life. *But I noticed that after earnest prayer this depression was greatly relieved, and at times completely vanished.* That which struck me most in the phenomenon was its irrationality. What I mean is that the relief was experienced again and again without any consciousness of its cause. I could not attribute it to a feeling

⁶ Sabatier, A., *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, James Pott & Co., N.Y. 1902. P. 308.

of satisfaction at having performed a religious duty, for I noticed that the relief came in many cases when no such feeling of satisfaction was or had been present in my mind. The importance of the phenomenon in respect to one's life was such as to lead me to further observation of it; and this process of induction has with me extended over a period of more than twenty years. . . . In watching this phenomenon, therefore, I have carefully checked my observation and have excluded all instances in which some intermediary cause intervened between prayer and the mental happiness resulting from it. In the thousands of instances which have come under my observation, for the phenomenon is at least of daily occurrence, *I have never observed any case in which earnest prayer has not been answered (to use the ordinary word), by an increase of mental happiness.*

"I do not wish it to be supposed that my observation leads me to believe that a high level of mental happiness must always result from prayer. There are other factors, of course, in the calculation, and, above all, the factor of bodily condition. Still, I imagine, though I cannot say that I have ever realized, that this factor may be to a great extent eliminated by the action of that factor which we call prayer. 'The prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' is after all a saying which must be true if the power of prayer is in any sense admitted. But, nevertheless, even to one who, like myself, is but ordinary in respect to righteousness, the conviction has come after long years of observation, that *prayer does invariably raise the level of mental happiness. . . . Consequently my faith rests upon an empirical basis.* But time forbids my speaking of the deductions from this major premise. This at any rate I know, that God can be approached along those paths along which I was led in childhood."⁷

I may add that the chief purpose of William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was to find facts pointing to the intervention in man of a super-human power or powers. His search was for a specific class of facts of inner experience. He had undertaken a *scientific*, not a metaphysical demonstration of the existence of a power of the kind necessary to religion.⁸

⁷ Digamma, An Aspect of Prayer, an Address before a "Society in a certain College in Oxford," Oxford, B. H. Blackwell. The italics are mine.

⁸ See Inter. Jr. of Ethics, 1904, vol. 14, pp. 323-339; or A Psychological Study of Religion, pp. 237-239; 272-274.

Without amplifying this too brief elucidation, I may conclude that the God of religion — not any God; not, for instance, the Absolute of modern Idealism — is known in “inner experiences,” *i.e.*, in the appearance in consciousness of particular states or processes. The knowledge of God derived from these experiences is an empirical knowledge. Remove these facts of consciousness and the God of religion may continue to exist, but he ceases to be an object of human knowledge.

2. *Religious knowledge is an altogether different sort of knowledge from scientific knowledge.* Here the limitation of religious psychology, instead of being found in the transcendental nature of God, is discovered in the nature of religious knowledge. Let me restate briefly the argument as it appears in Ritschlian literature.

Religion is concerned with judgments of value, expressive of the bond connecting man with the universe. The specifically religious function of the mind is, according to Ritschl, the formation of certain judgments or “perceptions” of value. These judgments proceed from the effect that certain ideas have upon man when he accepts them as true. For example, the idea of Jesus conceived as the only Son of God, produces in man experiences having a peculiar affective quality and significance. W. Herrmann considers that “the religious view is an answer to the question, ‘How must the world be judged if the highest good is to be real?’” “The concern of religion is to regard the multiplicity of the world as the orderly whole of means by which the highest value of the pious man, which is expressed in feeling, is realized.”

Religious knowledge is, in this view, an expression of the value, of the feeling-significance, to the individual of a certain category of facts, in particular of those in which man apprehends his relation to the universe. That

knowledge is, we are told, outside of the sphere of science, for values are experiences upon which science cannot do its work of analysis and causal explanation. It follows that religious and scientific knowledge cannot enter into conflict with each other; they move in altogether different spheres. This argument, grounded upon the assumption that religion is concerned with values and not with causal relations, has become the stock argument by which Ritschlians, as well as other theologians and even psychologists, defend the independence of religion from science.

If this argument were to be regarded as representing correctly and fully the nature of religion, causal relations and questions of objective existence would lie outside of theology. It could have nothing to say about the existence of God or of Christ, but only about the value to man of the God-idea. Ritschl has in fact been accused of affirming only the subjective and not the objective existence of God. However that may be, there is no lack of men who like Ritschl assume the rôle of defenders of the Christian religion, and yet declare openly that religious conceptions are only images. One reads, for instance, in a late number of the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* that the religious conceptions should not be regarded as descriptive of objective existences; they serve merely as means for the expression and development of the religious values; they are merely symbols, one may even call them poetical forms.⁹

The absurd length to which a symbolic interpretation of Christian dogma may be carried is exemplified in Hegel's philosophy of religion. He speaks of revealed religion, but he excludes from the meaning of that term any manifestation of God by a supernatural or miraculous channel; of the love of God, but the expression "God is love" means for him that in the Absolute contradictions

⁹K. A. Busch, vol. 5, 1911, pp. 209-218.

are transcended, what is opposed to God is yet in union with him; of the Son, but the meaning of that metaphor is that "when we concentrate attention on the manifestation of God, as distinguished from his inner essence, we are dealing with God as the 'other' of Himself."¹⁰ However numerous the supporters of Christianity who affirm merely the symbolic or the poetic character of the Christian God-idea, it is the presence of realists which makes possible the continuance of the existing religious institutions. If all men were symbolists with regard to the religious conceptions, the ludicrousness of a company of worshippers assembled to repeat the Christian creeds, the litany, and the prayers of the books of Common Worship, would be overpowering. How long would the long-bearded St. Nicholases be on our street corners, if none of our children were naïve realists?¹¹

The Ritschlian argument just sketched is open to the two following objections:

(a) The nature of religion is stated so incompletely in that argument as to invalidate its conclusion. The formation of judgments of value is indeed a constituent

¹⁰ John Watson, *The Interpretation of Religious Experience*, I, p. 345.

¹¹ I am well aware that much of the religious and theological language is in a sense figurative even for those whom I have designated as naïve realists. But symbolism does not reach for them the more fundamental dogma of religion. I know also that there is a sense in which all speech can be said to be symbolic. But the realists of whom we speak give to the term another than that general meaning, for they discriminate in theological formulae between figurative and non-figurative expressions. One reads, for instance, in an *Outline of Christian Theology* by W. N. Clarke (15 ed., pp. 3, 65, 13) much used by students: "In a definition of God it is best as far as possible to avoid figurative language; for metaphors are ambiguous, and figurative language in a compact statement tends to destroy the proportion and draw undue attention to minor points." And the author proceeds to define God as a Personal Spirit, Infinite, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Immutable, Holy, and Loving. These terms are not for him symbolic. Nor should we take him as speaking figuratively when he says, "Revelation to Israel through Moses was not made in writing; it was made in small parts by speech, but mainly by action, for Israel was taught to know God and His will mainly in what He did among them."

Should I be criticised for a lack of historical sense, I should turn upon my critics with the remark that they suffer from an excessive wish to see likenesses and continuity. The philosopher should recognize both the likenesses and the differences characteristic of successive historical movements. There are points in social development separated by differences so important that to use the old terms in the new sense can lead only to misunderstanding.

part of religious life, but it is also a part of *every other form* of human activity.

Whether it be in business, in ethics, in art, or in religion, our behavior is conditioned by judgments of value. One does not come much nearer to the complete truth by making of a specific class of judgments of value — those referring to man's relation to God — the distinguishing mark of religion. The essential nature of religion cannot be described adequately in terms of value-judgments of any sort, for religion is not merely an appreciation of that which has (ultimate) value; *it is an expression of desire for that to which worth is ascribed.*

(b) In a being constituted as man is, a sense of value leads inevitably to a search for means of securing or preserving that which has value. The gods about whom religions were built had an experiential origin in the needs for the understanding of experience and for assistance in the struggle for physical and moral growth. *Therefore religious beliefs and practices constitute a system of means for the realization of values.* Thus religion is vitally concerned with causal relations.

For those who realize that the transcendental, impassive Absolute is not and never has been the God of any organized religion, the relation of science to theology may be stated as follows:

1. The gods of the religions, called into existence in human consciousness for the gratification of certain needs (logical, affective, ethical, and æsthetic), are now held to manifest themselves in and through their action upon the physical universe, or within man, or both. They have the value of empirical inductions, and are therefore objects of scientific research as much as and for the same reason as any scientific hypothesis.

2. The means and the methods by which man has learned to enter into relation with his gods involve, as a

matter of course, causal relations between him and the divinity. These means and methods fall therefore also within the field of scientific investigation.

3. In so far as doctrines are affirmations regarding the nature of the gods of religion, the nature of man, and the means and the conditions of saving intercourse with the divinity, they fall within the pale of science.

The greater number of these scientific theological problems is referable to psychology.